

## ISSUE 5. Preservation and Protection of Californian's Cultural Heritage

**California's rich and diverse cultural heritage is not well understood and statewide preservation and protection is in need of better coordination.**

California's 12,000 year cultural heritage is rich, diverse and offers a glimpse to the past as well as clues for explaining the present. Looking back in time provides an opportunity to appreciate the people, places and events that have helped to define the character of California. The prehistory and history of California is filled with adventure, hardships, tragedy and success that stimulate a sense of awe, inspiration and reflection. The settling of California from the first inhabitants to the immigrants of more recent times has influenced tradition, customs and the cultural diversity of the state. Many of the California landscapes we enjoy today were defined by activities from decades and even centuries ago. Cultural resources, whether historic, archaeological or paleontological, can enlighten, inspire, amaze, educate and entertain citizens and visitors from all walks of life. Eras gone by come alive to thrill audiences and challenge the imagination of children through interpretative programs.

Californians are fascinated with the cultural resources of the state and show strong support for public funding to provide additional facilities. The 1997 Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California shows that visiting museums and historic sites is increasingly popular as a family recreation activity. The survey showed that nearly 75 percent of all Californians visited museums or historic sites during the year. This participation rate was second only to recreational walking in overall popularity. Respondents visiting museums or historic sites averaged 10 activity days per year, for an estimated 61.8 million household participation days per year. The survey also revealed a high-unmet demand for cultural resource related activities, a willingness to pay for such services, and support for public funding for cultural resource related facilities.

The management, interpretation and effective use of California's cultural resources pose tremendous opportunities for education, public outreach, and even economic development. Cultural resources can serve as an exciting and interesting "hook" to make education and learning fun. As educational tools, cultural resources can be integrated with other studies such as math, history and science to make them more meaningful and relevant. Through effective outreach, examples of California's cultural heritage can serve to inform and educate, create greater public appreciation and awareness and afford the proper protection of these resources.

Cultural resources can be used by communities to celebrate California's growing multicultural population. This can be accomplished through festivals and fairs to promote greater appreciation for and acceptance of cultural differences. Community park and recreation programs can incorporate cultural resource related activities or events as a community service involving volunteer organizations. With a growing

elderly population, coupled with the rise in older Californians caring for grandchildren, heritage based tourism provides an intriguing economic venue for many service providers.

Cooperation and coordination for the statewide management of cultural resources is difficult at best. California's cultural resources are not renewable and the very diversity, complexity and breath of what is available create a statewide management challenge. Cultural resources are limited to what's available, discoverable or will become eligible in the foreseeable future. Often they are fragile, irreplaceable, difficult to protect and costly to restore and maintain. They are widely distributed about the state and are administered by many different federal, state, local, nonprofit and private agencies and organizations and citizens. For many agencies, the management of cultural resources is not a primary management responsibility or part of their mission. In fact, many park and recreation service providers view archaeological sites and historic buildings as a disincentive to their activities and avoid acquiring properties containing these features or, once acquired, seek their removal. At the statewide level, only the California Department of Parks and Recreation assumes a measure of responsibility for addressing the broad sweep of California's history.

The result of all this has been that there is no cooperative effort to identify how the state's history should be properly portrayed for the education and enlightenment of Californians, nor for the acquisition, protection, management and interpretation of the state's irreplaceable cultural resources. Rather, each agency pursues a wholly independent course of action or inaction.

### **Key Points:**

- The acquisition of historic, pre-historic and paleontologic sites are not well coordinated and only a few agencies consider the protection of cultural resources as a primary part of their mission.
- There is high-unmet demand for the portrayal of California's history and coordination as to how to meet the demand is lacking.
- The management, interpretation and effective use of California's cultural resources for education, public outreach, and tourism are inconsistent.

### **Actions to Preserve, Protect, Use and Enjoy California's Cultural Heritage:**

1. Develop a comprehensive strategy for the management, interpretation and use California's cultural resources.

- A. Convene a cultural resources summit including key public, private and non-profit stakeholders, key officials, support groups and opinion leaders for the purpose of developing a cultural resource strategy for California.
  - B. Create a coalition of all federal and state agencies that have a role in cultural resource protection and management. Use the coalition to serve in an advisory capacity for implementation of the California cultural resource strategy.
  - C. Develop a strategy for making cultural resources more accessible, relevant and exciting for Californian's thereby elevating their awareness and support.
2. Complete a statewide inventory of cultural resources and conduct a gap analysis for missing or under represented cultural themes to serve as a priority guideline for future acquisitions.
  - A. Establish a statewide system for prioritization of acquisitions of cultural resources.
  - B. Complete a statewide cultural resources management plan that sets forth the priorities for future cultural resources land acquisitions.
  - C. Identify potential funding sources necessary to complete priority acquisitions.
3. Develop and implement public outreach programs to encourage public involvement and interest and provide education programs and materials.
  - A. Develop cultural resources outreach plan by developing goals and objectives, messages, intended audiences, topics and identifying tourism concerns.
  - B. Research cost effective public outreach programs on a national basis and adapt the best of the best that will fulfill the need for California.
  - C. Identify potential funding sources for implementation of outreach programs.
4. Expand the technical assistance program(s) by tying into other resources and agencies. Establish a system for ready access to relevant information.
5. Connect cultural tourism with other park and recreation offerings. Cultural resources by themselves may be isolated which could downplay their importance. By incorporating other activities near or around them may boost their appeal and promote community awareness about the cultural diversity of where they live.